

Message Text

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SUBJ: 60TH ECOSOC--STATEMENT ON DECADE FOR ACTION TO COMBAT
RACISM DELIVERED BY GOVERNOR SCRANTON

1. GOVERNOR SCRANTON DELIVERED THE STATEMENT, REPEATED
BELOW, ON SUBJECT ITEM IN THE PLENARY OF THE ECOSOC ON
AFTERNOON OF APRIL 28.

MR. PRESIDENT, SINCE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE HAD AN
OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, MAY
I EXTEND TO YOU, SIR, AND THROUGH YOU TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
BUREAU THE VERY BEST WISHES OF THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION
IN ALL OF YOUR ENDEAVORS.

THE CREATION IN 1973 OF THE DECADE FOR ACTION TO COMBAT
RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION WAS THE PRODUCT OF
CONSENSUS. EVERY MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUPPORTED THIS
PROGRAM. THE UNITED STATES PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN SHAPING
THAT CONSENSUS, AND WE DID SO WITH ENTHUSIASM, WITH HOPE,
AND WITH THAT MOST CRITICAL INGREDIENT, REALISM. WE,
OURSELVES, WERE A FULL TWO DECADES INTO THE EFFORT TO
INSTITUTIONALIZE THE RESULTS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS REVOLUTION
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THAT HAD BEEN SPARKED BY THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

IN THE CASE OF BROWN V. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION. WE KNEW THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFTING A MORAL PRINCIPLE TO THE LEVEL OF NATIONAL LAW AND THEN REDUCING IT TO THE LEVEL OF PARTICULARITY, TAKING THE IDEALS OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL AND RACIAL EQUALITY AND MAKING THEM PART OF THE DAILY LIFE OF THE LAND.

WE KNOW THAT THIS IS A COMPLEX AND A PAINFUL TASK, THAT EVEN SMALL STEPS STIR STRONG RESISTANCE, THAT TO PREVAIL WE MUST PERSIST, AND, MOST IMPORTANT, THAT OUR EFFORTS DEPEND CRUCIALLY ON DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING A STRONG SUPPORTING CONSENSUS.

THERE HAS BEEN NO MORE DIFFICULT SOCIAL PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES OF THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES THAN MAINTAINING THAT BASIC CONSENSUS AMONG THE PEOPLE, THEIR POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES, AMONG LAY LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP INSTITUTIONS. BUT WE HAVE DONE SO. AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO DO SO. FOR WITHOUT A GENERAL BELIEF THAT THE ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ARE CENTRAL GOALS OF OUR SOCIETY, RIGHTLY DEFINED AND FAIRLY PURSUED, OUR EFFORTS WOULD FALTER AND THEN INEVITABLY FAIL.

OVER A PERIOD OF THIRTY YEARS, THE UNITED NATIONS BUILT AND MAINTAINED A SIMILAR CONSENSUS. THE EARLY WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THE ADOPTION OF THE CONVENTION TO ELIMINATE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, AND THE LAUNCHING IN 1973 OF THE DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION WERE ALL INSPIRED BY A COMMON COMMITMENT TO WORK AGAINST CERTAIN UNIVERSALLY DEFINED WRONGS.

WE AMERICANS COULD NOT BE TRUE TO OURSELVES IF WE FAILED TO SUPPORT EVERY PROPER EFFORT TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. I HAVE IN MIND MOST PARTICULARLY ONE OF THE WORST CONTEMPORARY MAINIFESTATIONS -- APARTHEID. WE FLATLY AND ABSOLUTELY OPPOSE APARTHEID. WE FIND THE PRACTICE ODIUS. IT IS A SYSTEM WHICH BRUTALIZES ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA -- BLACKS, COLOREDS, ASIANS AND WHITES. IT REMAINS MY GOVERNMENT'S BELIEF THAT SOUTH AFRICA MUST BE EXPOSED TO RELENTLESS DEMANDS OF THE WORLD

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COMMUNITY UNTIL THIS DEPLORABLE SYSTEM IS ERADICATED. OUR FEELINGS EXTEND BEYOND SOUTH AFRICA TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ANYWHERE.

MR. PRESIDENT, I MUST ALSO REAFFIRM THE UNITED STATES POSITION REGARDING THE DECADE. THE UNWISE, UNJUST, AND COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE ACTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ADOPTING RESOLUTION 3379, EQUATING ZIONISM WITH RACISM AND RACIAL

DISCRIMINATION, DEFORMED THE MEANING OF THOSE TERMS. IT DEMOLISHED THE UNITED NATIONS CONSENSUS ON QUESTIONS RELATING TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

ZIONISM IS NOT RACISM. IT IS NOT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. IT IS A JUSTIFIABLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE MAINFESTATION OF NATIONAL FEELING ON THE PART OF A PEOPLE ENTITLED TO A HOMELAND, WHOSE CLAIM TO A HOMELAND WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO. THE FINAL BORDERS OF THAT HOMELAND HAVE NOT BEEN AGREED UPON AND THE SEARCH FOR A JUST AND LASTING SETTLEMENT OF THIS DISPUTE HAS ABSORBED OUR ENERGIES AND OUR ATTENTIONS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THIS EARLY ACT OF RECOGNITION BY THE UNITED NATIONS IS NOT AT ISSUE.

THE UNITED STATES WILL NEVER ACCEPT THE THESIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 3379 -- ANY MORE THAN IT WOULD AGREE THAT OTHER LEGITIMATE NATIONAL MOVEMENTS ARE TO BE CONDEMNED AS FORMS OF "RACISM" OR "RACIAL DISCRIMINATION." THIS ATTITUDE IS NOT THE POLICY OF A PARTICULAR ADMINISTRATION AT A PARTICULAR MOMENT. IT IS A VIEW STRONGLY HELD THROUGHOUT THE CONGRESS, THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, AND THE NATION AS A WHOLE.

BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES FELT SO STRONGLY ABOUT RESOLUTION 3379, IT CONCLUDED AND ANNOUNCED THAT IT COULD NO LONGER PARTICIPATE IN THE DECADE, OR SUPPORT IT, OR SPECIFICALLY, ATTEND THE PLANNED CONFERENCE IN GHANA. WE WILL ADHERE TO THIS POSITION. THE UNITED STATES COULD RESUME ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE DECADE ONLY IF THE DECADE WERE TO RETURN TO ITS ORIGINAL BASIS, WHICH WAS ONCE ACCEPTED BY A BROAD CONSENSUS.

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WHAT I HAVE SAID TODAY I HAVE SAID NOT OUT OF ANGER OR OUT OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT AS A DEEPLY-FELT EXPRESSION OF CONCERN FOR THE INTEGRITY AND THE VITALITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM. TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE, THE WORLD TOO FILLED WITH POLITICAL STRIFE TO CONTINUE TO PERMIT THIS GREAT FORUM TO BE USED TO INFLAME RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS ANTAGONISMS. TOO MANY NATIONS AND PEOPLES SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY TO PERMIT OUR TIME TO BE WASTED IN POLITICAL VILIFICATION. THAT IS NO ANSWER. THE ANSWER IS STABLE AGREEMENTS REACHED THROUGH CONSENSUS. SCRANTON

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